1: Dube E-5 (1951-52) 1955 AW17 Telugu AW17

ECONOMIC STRUCTURE

THE SALE

The Sale consider themselves superior to the other artisan castes. Nowadays they no longer work on the basis of affiliation to the village agriculturists. According to an old informant, 'In the good old days when the Sale used to spin their thread in addition to weaving cloth, they also entered into a definite arrangement with the agriculturists, as most castes do to-day. They supplied us with a certain length of cloth every year, and in return we gave them some grain at each harvest. But now times have changed. They buy yarn manufactured in the mills, weave fancy cloth and sell it for cash.' The weavers have now practically abandoned the traditional system. Only with certain occupational castes do they arrive at a working arrangement under which, in return for their services, they give them an agreed length of cloth. In the course of our investigations we found that such arrangements existed between weavers on the one hand, and potters, barbers and washermen on the other.

564
286
476

THE GAONDLA

The villagers in this area are very fond of *sendi*, or fermented palm juice. The Gaondla shops are the centre of attraction in the evenings for men—young and old—as well as for many middle-aged and old women. This caste has the monopoly of tapping the different kinds of palm trees, and also of selling the fermented juice, and has admirably succeeded in maintaining it, notwithstanding the introduction of the system by which government leases trees to the highest bidders irrespective of their caste. In Shamirpet, so far, there has been no challenge to their monopoly; although occasionally the Madigas and other poor people steal juice from the pots tied to the trees by the Gaondlas. The Gaondlas first mark out the trees to be tapped, then actually tap them in the afternoons and evenings, and tie pots at the points where each tree has been tapped to collect the dripping juice. Early next morning they go round to these trees again, climb up, and bring back to the village all the juice collected during the night. This is kept by them in large earthen pots and retailed to customers on demand, expecially in the afternoon and in the evening. One of the Gaondla families in the village has a government contract for other liquors and intoxicants. In addition to the fermented palm juice, that shop also sells several other varieties of liquor obtained from distilleries

564
249
273
[275]
[477]
275
564

1: Dube E-5 (1951-52) 1955 AW17 Telugu AW17
Muslims
Hindus

262 this supply is exhausted, very few vegetables are bought for everyday home consumption. Tender leaves of the tamarind tree are curried and pickled, and are popular with all sections of the community. The poorer people collect wild leafy vegetables; those who are better off buy brinjals, okra and unripe bananas. Tea and coffee are regarded as fashionable, and are regularly used by the rich people as well as those who are educated and who have [273] had some urban contacts. With the exception of the Brahmin and the Komti all castes permit the drinking of fermented palm-juice by men; in most of the lower castes women are also not denied its use. Some Muslims claim never to touch it as its use is not permitted by their religion; others drink it openly. A limited quantity of other liquor imported from the city is also consumed in the village.

Among the Hindus, the Brahmin and the Komti are vegetarians; and the eating of all kinds of meat, fish and eggs is forbidden to them. All the Hindu castes abstain from beef; although the Madiga untouchables are allowed to eat the carrion of cattle which they are expected to dispose of. The Muslims eat beef, but refuse pork. With the exception of the Erkalas and the Madigas, no other Hindu caste eats the domestic pig; wild pigs, of course, are regarded as a delicacy by all meat-eaters except the Muslims.

Milk and *ghee* (clarified butter) are greatly valued, but are difficult to get, and indeed very few people can claim to have them as a part of their everyday diet.

Very little fruit is eaten in the village. When in season, mangoes, guavas and *jamun* (*Eugenia jambolana*) are eaten by the people, more commonly by the children. The only fruit-bearing trees grown by them in their backyards are lime and drum-stick trees. Few people buy any fruit in the markets and shops of the city. Coconuts and bananas are bought for ceremonial occasions, and occasionally large varieties of mangoes too are bought from the shops.

[264] Those who can afford eat three times, others eat only twice daily. According to the seasons there are variations in the type of food and also in the time when the principal meals are eaten. The following menus will illustrate the kind of food eaten by families at different economic levels:

25: Whitehead M-3 (no date) 1921 AW1 India
TELUGU AW17

part in the sacrifice, and conduct the buffalo from house to house. One Mādigā goes on ahead, with a tom-tom, to announce that "the buffalo devoted to the goddess is coming." The people then come out from their houses, bow down to worship the buffalo, and pour water over his feet, and also give some food to the Mālās and Mādigās, who form the procession. By about eight p.m. this ceremony is finished, and the buffalo is brought to an open spot in the village and tied up near a small canopy of cloths supported on bamboo poles, which has been set up for the reception of the goddess. All the villagers then assemble at the same place, and at about ten p.m. they go in procession, with music and tom-toms and torches, to the house of the potter, where the clay image is ready prepared. On arriving at his house, they pour about two and a half measures of rice on the ground and put the image on the top of it, adorned with a new cloth and jewels. All who are present then worship the image, and a ram is killed, its head being cut off with a large chopper, and the blood sprinkled on the top of the image, as a kind of consecration. The potter then takes up the idol and carries it out of the house for a little distance, and gives it to a washerman, who carries it to the place where the canopy has been set up to receive it. During the procession the people flourish sticks and swords and spears to keep off the evil spirits, and, for the same purpose, cut limes in half and throw them up in the air. The idea is that the greedy demons will clutch at the golden limes and carry them off, and so be diverted from any attack on the man who carries the image. When the idol has been duly deposited under the canopy, another procession is made to the house of the toddy-drawer. He is the man who climbs the palm trees and draws off the juice which is made into toddy. At his house some rice is cooked, and a pot of toddy and a bottle of *arrack*[1] are produced and duly smeared with yellow turmeric and a red paste, constantly used in religious

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782

[1] Arrack is a native intoxicant.

[273]

31: Slater S-5 (1916-1917) 1918 AWI India
Telugu AWI7

Socially, it increases drunkenness in the lower classes; and I find more crimes in summer than in other seasons.

But it has turned the honest and sympathetic ryots into greedy money-lenders and capitalists. It has increased the lust for gold. True that the poorer classes have an opportunity of clearing off their family debts; true that they find sufficient food to eat in summer at least; true that there is more money in the village now than 20 years ago. But equally is it true that there are more debts now; that the gulf between the rich and the poor is widened more and more; that the once poor are now poorer and the once rich now richer. There is greater struggle, greater competition, and greater rises and falls of life.

Economic history of the village.—When compared with fifteen years ago, the village has, on the whole, progressed economically. True that estates once united are now split up into fragments; and that the once poor have now become poorer. True that there are cases where people borrow money and purchase land with it; and then sell it again to clear off that debt some years later. Still the village has improved. There is increase and improvement in agriculture. Many fields that were once forest are now brought under cultivation. There is more money in the village now than 20 years ago, more produce is now exported from the village than before. The introduction of the railway near by has revolutionized the commercial condition of the village. Prices have risen both of the commodities produced and of land in general, three or four-fold. There is a greater inflow of foreign goods into the village. Kerosene oil has completely driven out castor oil. There are sixteen Japanese wind-proof lamps in the village. The standard of living has decidedly been raised. Among the lower castes to eat solid food was a luxury; conjee, prepared of korra and ragi, was the food for all the lower castes, including Sudras. Now they all eat rice and cholam and wear better clothing. But the money is ultimately finding its destination into the hands of the rich money-lenders. Formerly there was enough corn in the land and there was a sort of self-sufficiency. Now there are more debts, consequently more ruin of families with the higher rates of interest, and greater servitude and misery.

If the Government were to open a sugar factory and utilize the jaggery, both the Government and the villagers would be profited. Wells can be very profitably sunk in the fields. But the ryots never do it, though it costs only Rs. 200. A ryot is prepared to spend even Rs. 1,500 in litigation but not Rs. 200 for a well in his fields, even though he is rich and knows that it is profitable. By example they may improve.

The Brahmans have almost lost their former property for want of any profession, while they incur heavy expenses for marriages, etc. Only one family is now well off. The Vaisyas too have lost their former lands by litigation, marriages, and other expenses. On the whole, the Sudras have grown richer, both with agriculture and the jaggery trade, and the rise of prices for their produce. The weavers, washermen, the Panchamas, many of the Sudras, are growing poorer; they are selling off the little lands they have for debts and other expenses.

Lands are sold chiefly to clear off old debts, though there are some cases where profits tempt people to purchase or sell. The

[i.e. The seasonal nature of industrial employment--Analyst]